



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

REGION 8
999 18TH STREET- SUITE 300
DENVER, CO 80202-2466
Phone 800-227-8917
<http://www.epa.gov/region08>

July 26, 2006

Ref: 8OC

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Clarification of October 2005 statement to CNN

FROM: David Romero /s/
Region 8 On-Scene Coordinator

TO: Nola Yancy
Director, Region 8 Office of Communications and Public Involvement

David Gray
Director, Region 6 Office of External Affairs

It has come to my attention that a statement I made to a CNN reporter in Slidell, La., on October 4, 2005, continues to be misconstrued and mischaracterized in media outlets and by local interest groups and academics. It is my intent to clarify this statement in order to correct those reports and prevent future inaccuracies. (Full article, dated October 5, is at: www.cnn.com/2005/TECH/science/10/05/hurricanes.toxins/index.html)

The CNN article focuses on the environmental threat posed by household chemicals along the Gulf Coast in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. The eighth paragraph of this report quotes me describing the household hazardous waste recovery effort: "If we're lucky, we'll probably get maybe 20 percent, 30 percent, somewhere right around there."

This statement has been mischaracterized in articles and reports several times since last October. While the quote itself is accurate, the writer of the piece failed to clearly explain what I was assessing. The 20-30 percent estimate I offered the reporter reflected my initial assessment of *the total amount of household hazardous waste that we would be able to recover from the immediate Slidell area in the wake of Katrina*. Floodwaters in Slidell were particularly high relative to other impacted areas, and this estimate reflected my assessment of the waste recovery effort in a very limited geographic location.

While I believe my statement was clear, it has since been used in reports as an estimate of what fraction of the total household hazardous waste we would be able to recover from the waste stream sent to landfills. This characterization is inaccurate. The task of removing household hazardous waste from the debris waste sent from cleanup sites to landfills was not one of my duties in Slidell. As a result, I had no knowledge or basis for speculation regarding the amount of household hazardous waste that was disposed in landfills.

My estimate about the situation in Slidell was made nearly 10 months ago, in the very first weeks of response. Far more accurate and updated information on post-Katrina waste recovery efforts is available today. I would encourage future media reports and communications products to rely on those sources of information.

Having assisted with Katrina response efforts on three separate occasions, I appreciate the value of accurate and updated information as the region continues to recover. I hope this clarification will prevent the future misuse of my statement.

